BRITISH COLUMBIA
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BC STATS

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Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services

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Current Statistics ◆ March 2007

- **British Columbia's unemployment rate dropped to a new low of 4.0% in February.** This was the first time since 1976 (the first year for which provincial labour force data are available) that the province's jobless rate has been this low. The record-low unemployment rate was reached despite slower job growth in February. The number of people with jobs in BC inched up just 0.1% following strong growth (+1.4%) in January. At the same time, there were fewer people who were either working or looking for work (- 0.2%). Last month's decline in the size of the labour force was the first since June 2006.

  The slow job growth was largely due to a slump in the goods sector, where employment fell back 1.9%, offsetting most of the gains made in the previous month. In particular, construction (-3.3%) and forestry, fishing & mining (-8.0%) saw drops back to December 2006 levels after surging ahead in January. Manufacturing employment stalled (-0.1%). However, the utilities industry posted strong job growth in February (+17.7%), which offset similarly large declines in the previous month.

  The service sector continued to take on more workers (+0.7%). Employment was up in most service industries, with a few notable exceptions. There were 3.7% fewer jobs in accommodation & food services and employment was also down in public administration (-4.8%) and management & administrative services (-13.0%).

  Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **Exports of BC products edged down 0.4% (*seasonally adjusted*) in January as international shipments of manufactured goods such as industrial & consumer products (-8.7%) and machinery, equipment & automobiles (-2.8%) declined.** At the same time, exports of forest (+4.5%) and energy (+2.6%) products increased for a second straight month, and agriculture exports advanced 0.6%.

  Shipments to the US, the province's biggest export market, were up 2.3% in January, largely due to higher exports of resource-based products. However, international shipments to other destinations, accounting for about 39% of total exports in January, were off 4.3%.

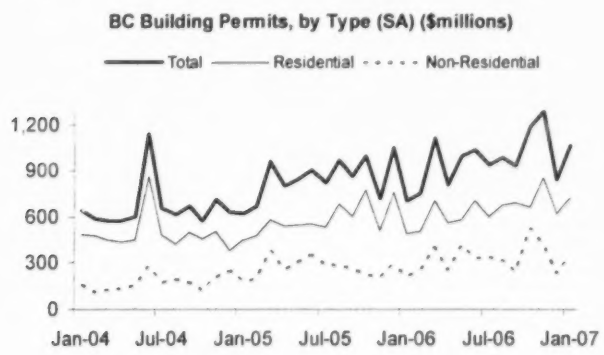
  Data Source: Statistics Canada & BC Stats

- **The number of housing starts in the province continued to seesaw, falling 16.7% in February, after climbing (+12.6%) in the previous month.** Canadian starts were off 21.0%, as most provinces posted declines that were well into the double digits. Inclement weather may have been a factor in the downturn. *Data Source: CMHC*

- **Shipments by BC manufacturers slipped (-0.4%, *seasonally adjusted*) in January as a slight increase in shipments by producers of non-durable goods (+0.5%) was offset by a slump in the durables sector (-1.1%).** The decline in the durable goods sector was driven by a decrease in the wood industry (-1.5%). Shipments of transportation equipment (+21.1%) continued to see-saw while producers of non-metallic mineral products (+1.1%), computer & electronic goods (+4.0%), and machinery (+5.8%) made notable gains. However, these were offset by weakness in the primary (-1.9%) and fabricated (-3.1%) metals industries.

Among producers of non-durables, manufacturers of chemicals (+7.3%) and paper products (+1.0%) recorded sizeable increases, but this was tempered by a slowdown in the food industry (-0.4%). *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

- **The value of building permits issued by BC municipalities jumped (+26.1%, *seasonally adjusted*) in January, as permits for both residential (+16.7%) and non-residential (+51.7%) projects surged.** Investment intentions soared in Abbotsford (+299.9%) and Victoria (+102.2%), while permits in the Vancouver area, where most of the province's planned activity occurs, were also significantly higher (+41.7%) than in December. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*



- **Sales by retailers in the province climbed 1.5% (*seasonally adjusted*) in January.** Retailers of furniture, household furnishings & electronics led the growth, as sales bounced back after two months of decline. In the automotive sector, gas stations and new and used car dealers posted solid gains. Clothing and general merchandise stores also had a good month in January, but other retailers did not fare as well.

Despite widespread gains in most sectors, national sales were down 0.2% largely because automotive retailers saw sales slow down, particularly in Ontario where total retail sales were off 2.1%. Cash registers in New Brunswick rang in 1.1% less than in January, but in the rest of the country, sales increased at rates ranging from 0.2% in Newfoundland & Labrador to 1.7% in Saskatchewan.

Data Source: Statistics Canada & BC Stats

- **Wholesale sales in BC rose 2.0% (*seasonally adjusted*) in January, on the heels of a similar increase in December (+1.8%).** Wholesalers of building supplies posted their first increase since September, and business was brisk for wholesalers of clothing, home & personal products and motor vehicle parts & accessories.

Data Source: Statistics Canada & BC Stats

- **British Columbia's year-over-year inflation rate was 2.2% in February, unchanged from the increase in the all-items Consumer Price Index (CPI) posted in the previous month.** Consumers, who had enjoyed a brief respite from soaring energy costs near the end of last year, faced a relatively big jump (+4.0%) in the cost of oil, gas and other energy products for the third month in a row. The cost of food jumped 3.7% in February, as January's cooler temperatures affected February harvests on the American West Coast and pushed up prices for fresh fruit (+13.4%) and vegetables (+15.4%).

Energy prices helped drive transportation costs up 3.0%, as owners paid more to operate their vehicles (+5.6%), largely because it cost them 7.4% more to fill up their tanks. Parts and maintenance costs (+3.9%), and insurance premiums (+5.0%) also helped drive up the cost of operating a vehicle.

Although fuel oil (+6.1%) took a bigger bite out of the household budget, the cost of piped gas continued to decline (-8.2%). Homeowners paid 2.8% more for accommodation, partly due to higher insurance premiums (+6.2%), while renters faced a much smaller increase (+0.7%).

BC residents paid more for clothing (+3.0%) and education services (+2.1%) and the cost of health & personal care (+2.3%) was also slightly higher than in February 2006. In general, consumers paid more for non-durable goods (+3.5%) and services (+2.6%), while prices for durables (-1.1%) dropped.

Data Source: Statistics Canada

MONTHLY STATISTICS

	UNITS	REFERENCE PERIOD	CURRENT			MONTHLY AVERAGE YEAR-TO-DATE	
			LATEST MONTH	% CHANGE FROM LAST MONTH	% CHANGE FROM YEAR AGO	AMOUNT	% CHANGE FROM YEAR AGO
PRICES							
Consumer Price Index-BC	1992=100	Feb '07	128.6	0.2	2.2	128.5	2.2
Consumer Price Index-Vancouver	1992=100	Feb '07	129.6	0.2	2.8	129.5	2.7
Consumer Price Index-Victoria	1992=100	Feb '07	128.3	0.2	1.8	128.2	1.8
Consumer Price Index-Canada	1992=100	Feb '07	131.2	0.7	2.0	130.8	1.6
Consumer Price Index-USA	1982-84=100	Feb '07	203.5	0.5	2.4	203.0	2.2
Industry Price Index-Canada	1997=100	Jan '07	115.1	-0.1	2.8	115.1	2.8
LABOUR							
Unemployment Rate (SA)*-BC	Percent	Feb '07	4.0	(4.3)	(4.7)	4.2	(4.9)
Unemployment Rate (SA)-Canada	Percent	Feb '07	6.1	(6.2)	(6.3)	6.2	(6.5)
Unemployment Rate (SA)-USA	Percent	Feb '07	4.5	(4.6)	(4.8)	4.6	(4.8)
Unemployed (SA)-BC	Thousand	Feb '07	94.6	-7.1	-11.4	98.2	-10.9
Employed (SA)-BC	Thousand	Feb '07	2,252.9	0.1	3.5	2,251.6	3.6
Labour Force (SA)-BC	Thousand	Feb '07	2,347.4	-0.2	2.8	2,349.7	2.9
Participation Rate (SA)-BC	Percent	Feb '07	66.2	(66.4)	(65.5)	66.3	(65.5)
Regular EI Benefits Paid	$Million	Jan '07	86.0	44.9	-5.6	86.0	-5.6
Regular EI Beneficiaries	Persons	Jan '07	53,160	11.8	-12.5	53,160	-12.5
Average Weekly Wage Rate-BC	Dollars	Feb '07	743.33	0.0	3.7	743.35	3.4
Wages and Salaries-BC (SA)	$Million	Dec '06	6,781.1	-1.5	6.4	6,671.3	8.3
Fixed-Weighted Earnings Index-BC	1996=100	Dec '06	120.8	1.8	3.4	118.1	1.9
PRODUCTION-B.C.							
Lumber-Cubic Metres	Thousand	Jan '07	3,467.8	30.1	-9.3	3,467.8	-9.3
Market Pulp Shipments-Tonnes	Thousand	Jan '07	415	16.9	-2.8	415	-2.8
Newsprint Shipments-Tonnes	Thousand	Jan '07	74	-26.0	-14.0	74	-14.0
Other Paper Shipments-Tonnes	Thousand	Jan '07	161	1.9	7.3	161	7.3
Coal-Tonnes	Thousand	Dec '06	1,681.0	-11.2	-4.1	1,760.9	-17.4
Oil-Cubic Metres	Thousand	Nov '06	136.2	-0.4	-3.3	137.9	-6.5
Natural Gas-Cubic Metres	Million	Nov '06	2,917.3	-3.7	9.5	2,879.0	8.6
Electric Power Generated	GW.h	Dec '06	6,451.5	11.4	-4.6	5,173.5	-8.4
Manufacturing Shipments (SA)	$Million	Jan '07	3,470.5	-0.4	-3.9	3,470.5	-3.9
GENERAL							
Housing Starts-All Areas BC(SAAR)**	Thousand	Feb '07	32.0	-16.7	-23.1	35.2	-8.5
Housing Starts-USA (SAAR)**	Thousand	Feb '07	1,525.0	9.0	-28.5	1,462.0	-33.5
Building Permits-BC (SA)	$Million	Jan '07	1,062.7	26.1	51.7	1,062.7	51.7
Residential-BC (SA)	$Million	Jan '07	719.0	16.7	46.7	719.0	46.7
Non-Residential-BC (SA)	$Million	Jan '07	343.7	51.7	63.3	343.7	63.3
Retail Sales (NAICS) (SA)-BC	$Million	Jan '07	4,559.0	1.5	5.5	4,559.0	5.5
Wholesale Trade (NAICS) (SA)-BC	$Million	Jan '07	4,303.0	2.0	0.8	4,303.0	0.8
Tourism Room Revenues (SA)-BC	$Thousand	Nov '06	158,804	1.3	2.5	151,320	7.8
Business Bankruptcies-BC	Number	Jan '07	50	35.1	-18.0	50	-18.0
Consumer Bankruptcies-BC	Number	Jan '07	551	26.1	-5.2	551	-5.2
Incorporations-BC	Number	Dec '06	2,363	-3.7	-3.3	2,556	7.3
Exports Originating in BC (SA)	$Million	Jan '07	2,746.8	-0.4	-6.4	2,746.8	-6.4

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*SA indicates seasonal adjustment.

**SAAR indicates seasonally adjusted at annual rates.

Brackets () indicate that rates are shown instead of percentage changes.

ANNUAL STATISTICS

	UNITS	YEAR				PERCENT CHAN		
		2006	2005	2004	2003	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003
PRICES								
Consumer Price Index-BC	1992=100	127.5	125.3	122.8	120.4	1.8	2.0	2.0
Consumer Price Index-Vancouver	1992=100	128.1	125.7	123.4	121.0	1.9	1.9	2.0
Consumer Price Index-Victoria	1992=100	127.5	125.5	122.8	120.0	1.6	2.2	2.3
Consumer Price Index-Canada	1992=100	129.9	127.3	124.6	122.3	2.0	2.2	1.9
Consumer Price Index-USA*	1982-84=100	201.6	195.3	188.9	184.0	3.2	3.4	2.7
Industry Price Index-Canada*	1997=100	113.8	111.2	109.5	106.2	2.3	1.6	3.1
LABOUR								
Unemployment Rate-BC	Percent	4.8	5.9	7.2	8.0			
Unemployment Rate-Canada	Percent	6.3	6.8	7.2	7.6			
Unemployment Rate-USA*	Percent	4.6	5.1	5.5	6.0			
Unemployed-BC	Thousand	109.6	132.9	159.2	176.0	-17.5	-16.5	-9.5
Employed-BC	Thousand	2,195.5	2,130.5	2,062.7	2,014.7	3.1	3.3	2.4
Labour Force-BC	Thousand	2,305.1	2,263.4	2,221.9	2,190.7	1.8	1.9	1.4
Participation Rate-BC	Percent	65.7	65.6	65.5	65.6			
Total EI Benefits Paid-BC*	$Million	1,564.2	1,650.3	1,764.0	1,831.3	-5.2	-6.4	-3.7
Regular EI Benefits Paid-BC*	$Million	723.7	837.4	960.4	1,059.5	-13.6	-12.8	-9.4
Average Weekly Wage Rate-BC	Dollars	726.02	704.49	686.74	683.68	3.1	2.6	0.4
Wages and Salaries-BC*	$Million	80,055.5	73,916.0	69,365.6	65,310.1	8.3	6.6	6.2
Fixed-Weighted Earnings Index-BC*	1996=100	118.1	115.9	112.9	108.5	1.9	2.7	4.1
PRODUCTION-B.C.								
Lumber-Cubic Metres*	Thousand	41,050.7	41,012.9	39,879.3	36,030.9	0.1	2.8	[redacted]
Market Pulp Shipments-Tonnes*	Thousand	4,736	4,932	4,724	4,762	-4.0	4.4	[redacted]
Newsprint Shipments-Tonnes*	Thousand	1,059	1,076	1,135	1,186	-1.6	-5.2	-4.3
Other Paper Shipments-Tonnes*	Thousand	1,960	1,877	1,841	1,733	4.4	2.0	6.2
Coal-Tonnes*	Thousand	21,131.0	25,571.0	27,082.0	23,061.0	-17.4	-5.6	17.4
Oil-Cubic Metres*	Thousand	n/a	1,765.7	2,019.0	2,168.2	n/a	-12.5	-6.9
Natural Gas-Cubic Metres*	Million	n/a	31,892.8	31,201.3	29,483.4	n/a	2.2	5.8
Electric Power Generated*	GW.h	62,082.1	67,811.2	60,495.6	63,050.9	-8.4	12.1	-4.1
Solid Mineral Shipments	$Million	5,620.4	4,924.8	3,674.5	2,913.5	14.1	34.0	26.1
Farm Cash Receipts**	$Million	2,323.7	2,383.8	2,401.7	2,283.3	-2.5	-0.7	5.2
Manufacturing Shipments*	$Million	42,034.1	41,139.8	42,303.5	39,691.0	2.2	-2.8	6.6
GENERAL								
Housing Starts-All Areas BC**	Thousand	36.4	34.7	32.9	26.2	5.1	5.3	25.8
Housing Starts-USA	Thousand	1,800.9	2,068.3	1,955.8	1,847.7	-12.9	5.8	5.9
Building Permits-BC*	$Million	11,541.5	10,182.9	7,938.7	6,394.2	13.3	28.3	24.2
Residential-BC*	$Million	7,620.7	6,970.8	5,868.9	4,514.2	9.3	18.8	30.0
Non-Residential-BC*	$Million	3,920.8	3,212.1	2,069.8	1,880.1	22.1	55.2	10.1
Retail Sales (NAICS)-BC*	$Million	53,113.3	49,914.5	47,216.6	44,421.0	6.4	5.7	6.3
Wholesale Trade (NAICS)-BC*	$Million	50,724.8	47,277.0	43,521.2	39,658.9	7.3	8.6	9.7
Tourism Room Revenues-BC*	$Thousand	n/a	1,690.1	1,592.2	1,486.7	n/a	6.2	7.1
Business Bankruptcies-BC	Number	587	786	922	1,002	-25.3	-14.8	-8.0
Consumer Bankruptcies-BC	Number	7,021	8,173	8,378	9,385	-14.1	-2.4	-10.7
Incorporations-BC*	Number	30,667	28,593	25,428	23,243	7.3	12.4	9.4
Exports Originating in BC*	$Million	33,306.6	34,101.4	30,991.6	28,264.4	-2.3	10.0	9.6
Capital Expenditures-BC	$Million	37,575.8	33,254.2	29,664.7	25,434.1	13.0	12.1	[redacted]
Population-BC (as of July 1)	Thousand	4,310,452	4,257,833	4,203,315	4,155,370	1.2	1.3	

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* derived from monthly figures

n/a not available

**derived from quarterly figures

ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT ($ MILLIONS)

	YEAR				PERCENT CHANGE		
	2006	2005	2004	2003	2005-06	2004-05	2003-04
BRITISH COLUMBIA							
Gross Domestic Product at Market Prices	n/a	168,855	157,540	145,763	n/a	7.2	8.1
Real Gross Domestic Product (chained 1997 $)	n/a	145,501	140,263	134,131	n/a	3.7	4.6
CANADA							
Gross Domestic Product at Market Prices	n/a	1,371,425	1,290,788	1,213,408	n/a	6.2	6.4
Real GDP at Market Prices (chained 1997 $)	n/a	1,157,705	1,124,688	1,088,773	n/a	2.9	3.3
UNITED STATES (Billions $US) **							
Gross Domestic Product at Market Prices	13,244.6	12,455.8	11,712.5	10,960.8	6.3	6.3	6.9
Real GDP at Market Prices (chained 2000 $US)	11,413.6	11,048.6	10,703.5	10,301.0	3.3	3.2	3.9

*** US Department of Commerce (actual)*

INTEREST AND EXCHANGE RATES

(Source: Bank of Canada)

	March 28/07	March 21/07	Feb. 28/07	March 29/06
	PERCENT PER ANNUM			
CANADA				
Prime Business Rate	6.00	6.00	6.00	5.50
Bank Rate	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.00
Long-Term Government Bond Rate (over 10 yrs)	4.21	4.18	4.14	4.26
Conventional Mortgages - 1 Year	6.40	6.40	6.50	6.05
- 5 Years	6.49	6.49	6.65	6.45
UNITED STATES				
Prime Rate	8.25	8.25	8.25	7.75
EXCHANGE RATES (average noon)	CANADIAN $			
US Dollar	1.1580	1.1578	1.1700	1.1724
Japanese Yen	0.0099	0.0098	0.0099	0.0100
British Pound	2.2707	2.2688	2.2946	2.0347
Euro	1.5438	1.5404	1.5479	1.4103

FORECASTS

	2006	2007			2008		
	REAL GDP % CHG	REAL GDP % CHG	UNEMP RATE %	CPI % CHG	REAL GDP % CHG	UNEMP RATE %	CPI % CHG
BRITISH COLUMBIA							
BC Government (February 2007, Budget 2007)	3.9	3.1	4.8	2.0	3.0	4.8	2.0
Credit Union Central BC (October 2006)	4.2	4.0	3.6	1.9	3.5	3.3	2.1
Conference Board of Canada (February 8, 2007)	3.3	3.1	4.9	1.5	3.3	4.5	2.0
Scotia Economics (March 15, 2007)	4.2	3.2	4.6	na	3.5	4.4	na
TD Bank (January 17, 2007)	4.0	3.0	5.2	1.9	3.3	5.1	2.0
CIBC WM Economics (October 31, 2006)	4.5	3.6	4.6	2.1	na	na	na
Global Insight (January 2007)	4.1	2.8	4.6	1.7	2.9	5.2	1.9
CANADA							
TD Bank (March 26, 2007)	2.7	2.4	6.2	1.8	2.9	6.2	2.2
CIBC WM Economics (March 13, 2007)	2.7	2.1	6.2	1.9	2.7	6.3	2.2
Global Insight (March 2007)	2.7	2.2	6.4	1.6	2.9	6.5	2.1
UNITED STATES							
TD Bank (March 26, 2007)	n/a	2.2	4.9	2.0	3.0	5.1	2.4
CIBC WM Economics (March 13, 2007)	n/a	2.2	4.8	2.1	3.0	4.9	2.7
Global Insight (March 2007)	n/a	2.7	4.7	1.5	3.0	4.7	2.3